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ABSTRACT

One goal of student affairs programming is the promotion of character development. Based on the assumption that empathy training will have a significant impact on character development, a study was designed which incorporated the listening skills (empathy) training of the Sierra Project (Whitely, 1982) with the Hersey/Blanchard model for situational leadership. College students' (N=39) scores on Kagan's Affective Sensitivity Scale fell within four groups of empathy readiness: R1 (low motivation/low ability), R2 (high motivation/low ability), R3 (high ability/low motivation), and R4 (high ability, high motivation). Subjects were then divided into four listening skills training workshop conditions: S1 (high task/low relationship), S2 (high task/high relationship), S3 (low task/high relationship), and S4 (low task/low relationship). In an effort to monitor the effects of the training on self-esteem, a semantic differential was administered before the workshop began, at the midpoint, and immediately after the workshop. The Affective Sensitivity Scale was readministered after completion of the workshop to measure changes in ability to empathize. The results indicated that high skilled students (R3-R4) who participated in a low structured (S3-S4) treatment did significantly better than high skilled students who participated in the high structured (S1-S2) intervention. Low skilled (R1-R2) students in a high structured (S1-S2) intervention did significantly better than low skilled students in a low structured (S3-S4) intervention. Changes in self-esteem throughout the study indicated the importance of monitoring self-esteem, although at this time results are only speculative. (NRB)

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MANAGEMENT THEORY MEETS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

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Management Theory Meets Student Development Theory: Implications for Student Affairs Programming

As we in the Student Affairs profession develop our role as "educators" it is important for us to conduct research and test our ideas by using a systematic methodology. It was in this spirit that we conducted a pilot project that, hopefully, would give us some signals as to whether or not exploring the application of situational leadership theory to student development programming was an effort worth pursuing on a larger scale. What we hoped to do with this pilot study was to raise questions and stimulate our thinking as we approach planning for our student development programming.

The idea we started out with is a relatively simple one. The notion of situational leadership is basically this: in "developing" individuals, it is necessary to take an assessment of their readiness to learn if we are to provide the appropriate effective leadership/teaching intervention. The stimulus for applying this particular notion to student development came from the work of John Whitely at the University of California, Irvine, Sierra Project. As Whitely stated:

> "Given the present level of theory, research, curriculum formulation in developmental education, there is simply not enough known about the optimal match between the development level of students and the sequencing of educational experiences to provide direction..... educational experiences must be proportionate to an individual's immediate capabilities, as well as his or her potential to grow."

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Theoretical Underpinnings

John Whitely and Associates' Sierra Project had some theoretical underpinnings from developmental and counseling psychology that played a part in the formulation of thinking in the current research project.

One of society's last chances to impact the citizenry of the future is through higher education (Whitely XXVII). Higher education has traditionally seen its primary mission as cognitive development with secondary mission in areas such as character development occuring through experience in and out of the classroom (Whitely XXVII). It is the authors' view that a primary goal of student affairs is character development.

Character with its two central constructs of moral reasoning and ego development was operationally defined in the Sierra Project by John Whitely. He defined character in the following:

> Character, as we have defined it conceptually, has two parts. The first part refers to an understanding of what is the right, fair, or good thing to do in a given circumstance. The second part refers to the ability to do those things (the courage to act in accordance with one's understanding of what is right, fair, and good).

The primary focal point of the Sierra project was Character Development. An important part of the Sierra curriculum was listening skills (empathy) training with the primary goal to be impacted on C. D. It makes sense that developing empathy helps students set aside the "self" and learn to listen to another person and this would stimulate moral growth past the initial egocentric, self-consciousness of Kohlberg's Stage 3. There is

also extensive research with similar findings, that support the notion that when we are doing skill training such as listening skill training, we are having a far greater impact.

Whitely (p. 53) sights the work of Mosher & Sprinthall (1970-71) and their discovery of the relationship between empathy and C.D. While teaching a course in counseling skills they learned the experimental group changed significantly in C.D. while a no treatment control group showed no change. The relationship between empathy and C.D. was further substantiated by Hogan & Associates (Hogan '69,'73; Hogan & Dickstein, '72; Greif & Hogan, '73). Along with the findings of Selman and Associates (Selman 71, 76a, 76b; Selman & Byrne '74; Selman & Damon'75), the Hogan & Associates and Mosher & Sprinthall works indicate that empathy and C.D. are integrally related.

One of the ideal and primary goals of Student Affairs programming is promoting and facilitating character growth and development. In the current study the assumption is made that the empathy training taught in listening skills training will have a very significant impact on character growth and development.

Whitely (p. 39) indicates the present level of theory, research and curriculum formulation in developmental education is insufficiently developed to suggest optimal matches between developmental levels of students and the sequencing of educational experiences. He is asking <u>when</u>. The current research project is trying to determine optimal levels of structure within levels of sequencing described above to coincide with levels of developmental readiness. So, we are also asking <u>how.</u>

We are following the Sierra assumption that freshmen with high needs

for affiliation would benefit from listening skill training to assist them in the task of affiliation. Where are they, however, in their own development regarding listening skill (empathy) training and would it not make sense to vary the treatment according to their level of development? Thus, the central research question of the current project: given different levels of development in empathy, will different approaches to teaching empathy make a difference? If we find that they do make a difference, what are the implications for Student Affairs programming and, indeed, for more effectively facilitating character development.

Situational Leadership

The Hersey/Blanchard model for situational leadership as refined by Keilty,Goldsmith & Boone is basically organized common sense. In my own organization we utilized this model as a basis for supervision. All professionals from the director's level on up have been trained in the use of the Hersey/Blanchard Model of Situational Leadership. It provided a basic common language, as well as conceptual framework in which to discuss management problems and strategies. Situational leadership is based on the notion that to be effective as a leader individuals must vary their leadership style according to the follower's readiness to perform a specific task.The model assumes that all effective leaders have a common attitude. This attitude is a balanced concern between outcome/production and the development and welfare of the people whom they lead. The "attitude" is the only factor in the effective leader's approach that should not vary in the situational leadership model. As a leader in an organization, we have legitimate concern for achieving goals, but this model's emphasis is achieving goals through people and, in this case, ultimately developing the follower to perform the task in a self-sufficient manner.

SELECTING LEADERSHIP STYLE

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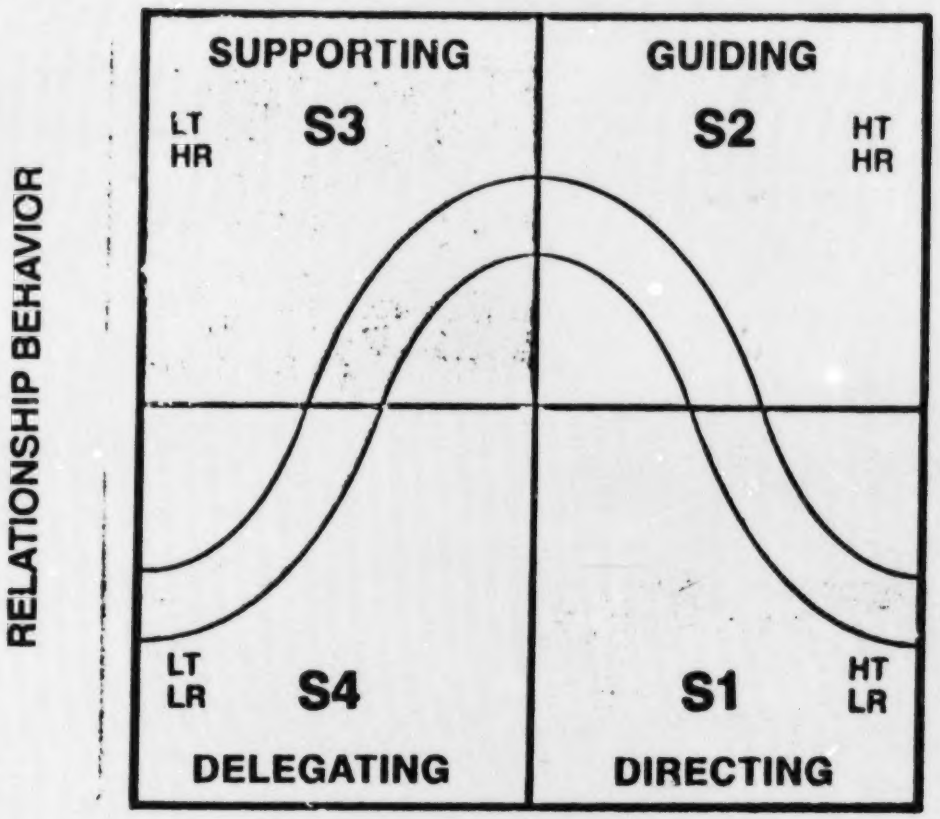

R4	R3	R2	R1

OTHER'S TASK-SPECIFIC READINESS

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Situational leadership assumes that management is interaction (communication). Although the attitudes of the leader do not vary, to be effective the behavior definitely does. The communication behavior that the model utilizes is a view of all "styles" as combinations of task and relationship. "Task" behavior is defined as one-way communication. "Task" behavior is essentially characterized by directing the "follower" as to what you want, when you want it, and how you want it done. In essence, the leader provides the structure for the task. Relationship behavior is two-way communication. It involves both sending and receiving on the part of the leader. Relationshp behavior is characterized by facilitating, listening and providing social emotional support. This type of behavior will directly affect the follower's self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Leadership styles are broken down into four categories based on a combination of task and relationship behavior on the part of the leader. These four styles are as follows:

S1 - High Task/Low Relationship

S2 - High Task/High Relationship

S3 - Low Task/High Relationship

S4 - Low Task/Low Relationship

Style 1. Directing. Characterized by high task/low relationship behavior. A Style 1 (S1) leader is one who closely supervises and follows up with the follower.

Style 2. Guiding. Behavior described by a style characterized by high task/high relationship behavior. This style would include a good deal of discussion, questioning between the follower and the leader, yet

still provide a high amount of structure in the task situation.

Style 3. Supporting. A style characterized by low task/high relationship which would involve little structuring but a good deal of listening, discussing and social/emotional support on the part of the leader.

Style 4. Delegating. A style characterized by low task/low relationship behavior on the part of the leader. In essence, the leader turns the work over to the follower, telling him what it is he wants done, but providing very little behavior of any kind after that point.

The question usually arises as to which one of these four styles, directing, guiding, supporting or delegating is most effective. The answer is this: a style will be effective if it is appropriate to the readiness and maturity of the follower. In other words, the leader cannot be effective based on a singular notion or style leadership, but must adopt a style predicated on the motivation and ability of the follower.

Readiness is assessed, based on the follower's motivation and ability to perform a specific task. The motivation of an individual is affected by 1) their sense of confidence and security in performing the task; 2) their willingness to take responsibility to initiate action; and 3) their desire to achieve or complete the task.

The follower's ability to perform the task can be assessed on, 1) their past experience with such a task; 2) specific training and skill level as it relates to the task; 3) their understanding of the task; and, 4) the understanding of the individual's role in completing the task. Symmetrical to the leadership styles, there are four combinations of degrees of readiness exhibited by followers for a specific task. They are:

R1 - Low motivation/Low Ability

R2 - High Motivation/Low Ability

R3 - High Ability/Low Motivation

R4 - High Ability/High Motivation

Figure I of the model demonstrates the appropriate match up of leadership style to follower's ability. A follower of R1 readiness should be led with an S1 style of directing; an R2 readiness led with an S2 style of guiding; an R3 readiness with an S3 style of supporting; an R4 with an S4 style of delegating.

Leadership management, then, becomes a process of assessing the readiness of the follower/learner and applying the appropriate leadership style. When there is an effective match of leadership style to follower/learner readiness, development will take place. The follower in the R1-R2 degree of readiness will have a lessor need for structure and a greater need for relationship as they become more adept at performing the task. The leader, in order to develop the follower/learner must take calculated risks in small increments. After initially providing the structure for the task, the leader must then begin a process of reducing the structure and increasing the relationship.

For learners who are in the R3-R4 state of readiness, the management situation involves less need for structure on the part of the follower/learner and also less need for relationship. It is important for the leader using an S3-S4 style to reduce structure and reduce relationship in order for the follower/learner to continue to develop.

Negative things can occur if there is a mismatch of style to state of

readiness. One of the more common mismatches is overleading. In overleading the leader provides more structure than the follower/learner requires. Typically, this leader likes to maintain the power and control of the situation. When an S1-S2 style is applied to R3-R4 followers, it is very likely that not only motivation will decline, but actual regression in ability will take place.

A mature follower is demoralized by a leader who takes away the responsibility for performance by providing too much structure. The lack of confidence on the part of the leader erodes the followers' motivation to perform and confidence in their own ability. A recent sports article on the demise of a professional basketball coach provides a classic case of a mismatch of S1 style leadership to R3-R4 players (followers). In the first season that the coach was responsible for the team, the article describes the players as, "smart and extraordinarily talented, needing only someone to stand up and wave a green flag." The coach or leader was described as someone who "worked hard, studied, listened to the players, rode lightly, enjoyed himself, and played it cool." This S3-S4 style applied to "smart and extraordinarily talented players" resulted in a style match and a national championship. A little over a year later, this coach was out of a job, leaving his championship team demoralized and losing. What hapened? According to the players, the coach "installed a complicated offense (high structure) that killed the fast break and forced the ball inside.....every time." The coach "insisted on calling every play from the bench, further slowing the action" and, furthermore, "rejected all input from the players." This situation is a classic mismatch that resulted not only in regression of ability and motivation, but actual subversion and

rebellion on the part of the followers. The players asked for the coach's termination.

The other side of mismatch is underleading the followers, i.e. an application of S3-S4 leadership style to R1-R2 followers. This type of mismatch results in a sense of abandonment on the part of the followers who desire a structure and high definition leadership, and interpret the underleading as a lack of care on the part of their leader. This can ultimately result in chaos, anxiety, frustration and hostility.

Method

The participants in this study were thirty-nine undergraduate volunteers. In an effort to parallel the freshman populations of the Sierra Project, the highest single class represented were freshmen (16) followed by 8 sophomores, 12 juniors and 4 seniors.

The treatment effects under investigation in this study were highly structured vs. low structured treatment. The structured listening skills training workshop covered several areas that Ivey uses in micro counseling training. The areas covered are, 1) attending behavior, 2) open invitation and minimal encouragement to talk, and, 3) paraphrasing and reflection of feeling. Each of these four sections had very clear definitions of the topic at hand, behavioral examples and dyadic exercises to provide an experiential component.

The low structured intervention in contrast was a series of discussion topics around developing listening skills. The following are representative stimulus questions for the low structured approach. 1) What are communication skills (nonverbal and verbal)? 2) What are problems or blocks in communication? 3) How do you know you are communicating?

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4) How do you know you are listening? 5) What are some of the things you have done to draw people out? 6) What happens during those times when you really had a meaningful conversation with someone? 7) How can we practice it?

The two different treatments were each co-administered by a man and a woman team from the Counseling Center staff. The treatment teams were blind regarding the readiness level of their groups.

Determining level of readiness in empathy was accomplished by administering Kagan's Affective Sensitivity Scale (1980). The high scoring end of the continuum was divided into two groups as was the low scoring end of the continuum providing the four cells for treatment (fig.1).

The low level of readiness, group 2, was given an inappropriately low structured listening skills training workshop and group 4 (low readiness) was given the prescribed high structure.

In an effort to monitor the effects of the training on self-concept, a semantic differential was administered before the workshop began, at the midpoint and immediately after. The affective sensitivity scale was also administered after the completion of the workshop to measure changes in ability to empathize.

Results

Overall results of the project are very encouraging. They are as follows:

1) The high skilled students (R3-R4) who participated in a low structure (S3-S4) treatment did significantly better than high skilled R3-R4 students who participated in the high structured (S1-S2) intervention. The statistical significance was at the .06 level. With the small n in each

cell it was more difficult to produce statistical significance, but these results are highly encouraging.

2) Low skilled (R1-R2) students who participated in a high structured intervention (S1-S2) did significantly better than low skilled (R1-R2) students who participated in a low structured (S3-S4) intervention. The statistical significance was at the .20 level.

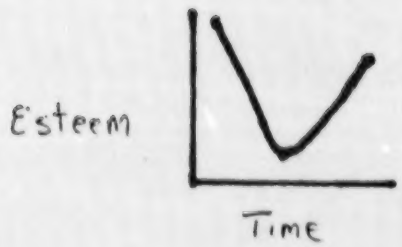
SKILL \ Structure	low	high
low	Group 4 Negligible Development	Group 2 Significant Development
high	Group 1 Significant Development	Group 3 Regression

If we were to characterize the actual increase in performance within each group, the outcome tends to indicate that the initial hypothesis, based on the Hersey/Blanchard leadership intervention held up when applied to student development. Where there were appropriate matches in style, i.e. low structure for high readiness learners and high structure for low readiness learners (Group 1 & 2) there was corresponding significant positive development in learning the task. Where a mismatch existed, i.e. high skill learners with high structure intervention and low skill learners with low skill intervention (Group 3 & 4) there were correspondingly negative results. Group 3 actually regressed as the theory would indicate should happen (Group 3, high skill, high structure). Group 4 (low skill, low structure) showed negligible development in their ability to learn the task, again as might be predicted.

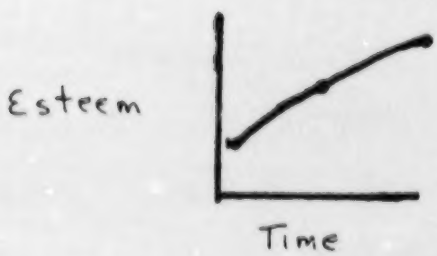
In looking at the variable of self-esteem, we found very interesting and sometimes confusing results. With unusual fluctuations, we can only speculate as to cause. At the least, these changes in self-esteem readings indicate that it is a worthwhile endeavor to monitor the self-esteem variable because something definitely is happening during treatment and could be significant to understanding treatment effects.

Self Esteem

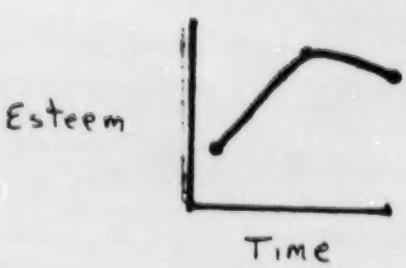
Group 1 - Hi Lo



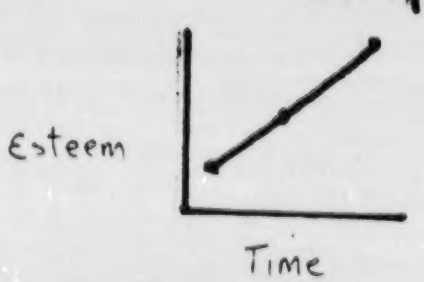
Group 2 Lo Hi



Group 3 Hi Hi



Group 4 LoLo



At the risk of over generalizing, we will speculate the following results:

In Group 1, high skill, low structure, there may have been a general effect pervading. We found that in all low structured groups there was a general resistance on the part of students who were used to getting their learning in fairly high structured doses (traditional lectures). Disorientation was reflected in an initial loss in self-esteem as the treatment progressed. This phenomena, however, is not uncommon when teaching students skills that have to do with traits or competencies that they see as already in their personal repertoire. In this case, as they begin to look at some of the skills of listening they discovered, in fact, they did not know as much as they thought and their competence became somewhat questioned and a sense of insecurity developed. The positive side of this initial loss in self-esteem or uneasiness could be that Piaget's sense of "disequilibrium" resulted. This "disequilibrium" caused the learner to become more persistent at developing the skill and thereby re-achieving a sense of competence. Indicative of this process would be the fact that their sense of worth or competence began to recover as the treatment neared completion. Group I was the group whose performance increased the most over the treatment time.

In Group 2 (low skill, high structure) self-esteem scores indicate that this group was very comfortable in the high structure situation. The comfort of operating in familiar structured learning allowed them to experience success and accompanying self-esteem in a continuing upward movement.

Group 3, the mismatched group of high skill and high structure, started out with a sense of comfort, perhaps an attitude of "we know this" but soon began to see the structure as an obstacle, perhaps became bored

and saw the continuing structure as spoon-feeding, an insult to their skill and a restraint to their future learning. Apparently the frustration and the decline in morale was enough to begin a downward trend in a positive sense of self as well as result in an actual decline in performance.

Group 4, low skilled students with a low structure provided the biggest puzzle. One can only speculate that the lack of structure with the group that had a low knowledge of listening skills was so frustrating that the resistence to this loss of structure created a situation where the learners saw the leaders as non-caring and incompetent. Hence, the group did not involve their ego in the outcome and perhaps formed a "coalition" and a "we/they" attitude toward the leaders. The "we" was the positive part of the experience.

The instructors reported pronounced hostility towards themselves and the treatment on the part of the learners. Yet, the continuing rise in self-esteem indicates once having divorced themselves from the outcome, the learners just enjoyed being together and against a common annoyance, the low structure leaders.

Recommendations:

The study indicates it may be worthwhile to pursue further research in applying this notion of situational leadership to programming. This study needs to be replicated with a larger number of subjects in each cell. In addition, a fruitful area for exploration could be the corresponding skill to listening (receiving) that would be assertiveness training (sending).

The results of this study also indicate a record might be kept similar to a student development transcript. Such a transcript might indicate

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the amount of experience or prior training that students had in a particular developmental skill. This would be helpful in planning developmental intervention and in designing the appropriate structure into these programs. With all the different extracurricular activity and prior experience that students bring to the learning situation it would be important to know what it is that they know before providing programming.

Correspondingly, all student development programming should have some assessment cycle. The study indicates that we need to individualize programming based on readiness to learn. This notion is not only a "good idea," but the trends of the pilot study indicate actual regression can take place when there is a mismatch between skill level and program intervention.

By going to a mandatory assessment component in all our programming, student affairs professionals would be forced to adapt competency-based training as opposed to many of the broad blanket homogeneous efforts with which we are currently involved. Competency-based training would also answer some of the questions Whitley raises in the area of sequencing. The response to sequencing is individualizing.

Student leadership programming, in particular, would seem to yield well to the notion of readiness and leadership style. It would be possible to deal more effectively with our development of new leaders and, correspondingly, in developing veterans who have already been exposed to leadership positions.

The study also indicates we need to affect some "bridges" when utilizing low structure training in order to reduce the hostility, frustration and anxiety most students seem to exhibit to a low structure situation.

This might be effected by an increase in the understanding of their role in the learning situation and by clearly stating what concepts are to be learned and how the learning is to take place. This should make the process in the low structure situation less anxiety producing and more fruitful.

Finally, in our effecting the overall environment, particularly in the residence halls, high structure, low structure approaches may be critical. There is definite reason why freshmen seem to flourish better in a dormitory situation than apartment living. Some of the policies which we apply to the general student population within the residence halls perhaps need to be examined in light of the readiness of the students to learn and develop in particular instances. Shrocder (1983) is experimenting with removing structure across the board in the residence halls at the University of St. Louis. The outcome here may provide a lot of information of further refining the impact of high structure, low structure situations based on learner readiness.

In closing, we are much encouraged to further pursue an application of these notions to student development programs and we encourage our colleagues to do likewise and share any information that may result in this further refinement of our role as educators in the hidden curriculum.

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